

Pictorial Representation of the Leo Belgicus in 17th Century Low Countries

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I. Introduction

The 17th century of Netherlands did not enjoy her golden age of culture and economy, but also went through the age of war. The Eighty years' War is political confusions continued from 1568 until 1648, when a peace treaty was signed. In addition, this long time war had truce by the agreement with Spain from 1609 to 1621.

Since 15th century, provinces of the Low Countries, as of today Netherland and Belgium, have been territories under the Hapsburg. And after the domination of Spain, they enforced on the Catholicism by means of the inquisition. Furthermore, both Calvinists in Northern Provinces, and Catholics in Southern Provinces increased dissatisfaction with the envoys who abused their power. At last, the Seventeen Provinces revolted against hegemony of Spain⁽¹⁾.

The reason for same revolt laid on religion, economy, and the structure of society. The Spanish Kingdom was ruled by centralized court, while Northern Netherlands was governed by a middle-class elite, in the cities formed by the profit from industry and trade.

II. Outline of the Leo Belgicus

We speculate about *Map of the Seventeen Dutch and Flemish Provinces as a Lion*, made by Claes Jansz Visscher (1587–1652) and his workshop, had consequence for Eighty years' War. This map has been published while the Twelve Years' Truce, that had been continuing from 1609 until 1621. At first blush an example seemed like a picture, which shaped a popular design called *Leo Belgicus* in the Low Countries. 'Belgica,' is a Latin word for the Low Countries.

In the early modern Low Countries, distinctive maps known as *Leo Belgicus* were published. The *Leo Belgicus* represents the region that corresponds to today's Netherlands and Belgium in the form of a lion. Michael Aizinger, an Austrian nobleman, published the original map in 1583 Cologne. After he had travelled around Europe, Aizinger published a history of the Low Countries, which had illustrations including the first *Leo Belgicus* engravings by Frans Hogenberg⁽²⁾.

A lion was found the heraldic animal for symbol. In Netherlands, the heraldic animal used for the crest of influential the nobility. Even after the revolt, the heraldic lion has established itself as symbol of

Netherlands. For example, a lion was likened to Netherlands itself in s by Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669), which could depict as political scene of Eighty years' war. Rembrandt drew this picture the times when the end of the war, therefore he depicted a lion roar at hardship times⁽³⁾.

III. Descriptions and Considerations

In contrast to Rembrandt's picture, Visscher's map published at times of the Truce. A lion is crouching and rising its right front foot to a large sword look like gesture of press down. At lower right sits a soldier falling asleep in sitting position. At the other side of his position, two women trample down a figure.

Behind theirs place, some people depicted who work on farm, or be pasture cows, or mount horses. We can look a distant view of town, a port, and the sea, in farther opposite background. Furthermore, upper right winged person scatter a book, a sandglass, or something for the land.

On the frame, etched views of twenty towns of Northern and Southern Netherlands in left and right border.

Visscher described some meaning of allegorical illustrations in background. At bottom right sleeping soldier is Mars, who is the god of war during Roman Mythology. His nap indicate that people not make war and enjoy their Truce. At bottom left women are the personifications of "the Free Netherlands," on the other, the figure be trampled down by women is the personification of "Old Conflict."

Thereby, we possible speculate about the background landscape as consequences of the Truce, or peace. The winged person described "Blessing," and the some tools mean "Art and Science," "Theology," and "Wealth." Those illustrations and descriptions explain to audience that the blessing is distributed by the God around the country.

In addition, where inscriptions point "Enlargement of towns" at an unfinished gate in front town, "Trade" at the port, "Prosperity of the country" at the sea. The lands for agriculture depicted as "Peaceful agriculture," and the men mounting horses depicted as "Save travel."⁽⁴⁾

Conclusion

In conclusion, I shall consider a reason that Vissecher produced pictorial maps.

In early modern times, people conscious that representation in map is equal to a figure of their community. And occasionally, some maps were exhibited at the public place.

For instance, the city hall in Amsterdam has entrance for citizen where was decorated with the very large world map made by marble. The center of world map is Amsterdam. The citizenry of Amsterdam was proud that their countries prosper in foreign trade. As for one reason that Vissecher produced print not as allegorical picture but as map with pictorial representation, I gather from backgrounds that he could represent an image of the Low Countries with emphasis.

The pictorial representation of the Leo Belgicus is a hint that we find out the meaning of sense of

community in 17th century Low Countries. However, engravings differ from the large decoration for the city hall of Amsterdam as to small image for private prints. Therefore, we need to research of ranges about distribution of same prints, in order to lean of accurate influence in those days.

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- (1) Mariët Westermann, *A Worldly Art: The Dutch Republic 1585–1718*, New Haven, 1996, pp. 18–21.
 - (2) R. V. Tooley, *Map Collectors' Circle*, No. 7: Leo Belgicus, London, 1963, p. 4.
 - (3) クリスティアン・テュンベル(Christian Tümpel), 高橋達史訳(Takahashi Tatushi) (trans.) 『レンブラント』(REMBRANDT), 中央公論社 (Chuokoron-sha), 1994, pp. 226–227.
 - (4) D. de Hoop Scheffer, *Holstein's Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts CA. 1450–1700*, Roosendaal/the Netherlands, Vol. 38, p. 105